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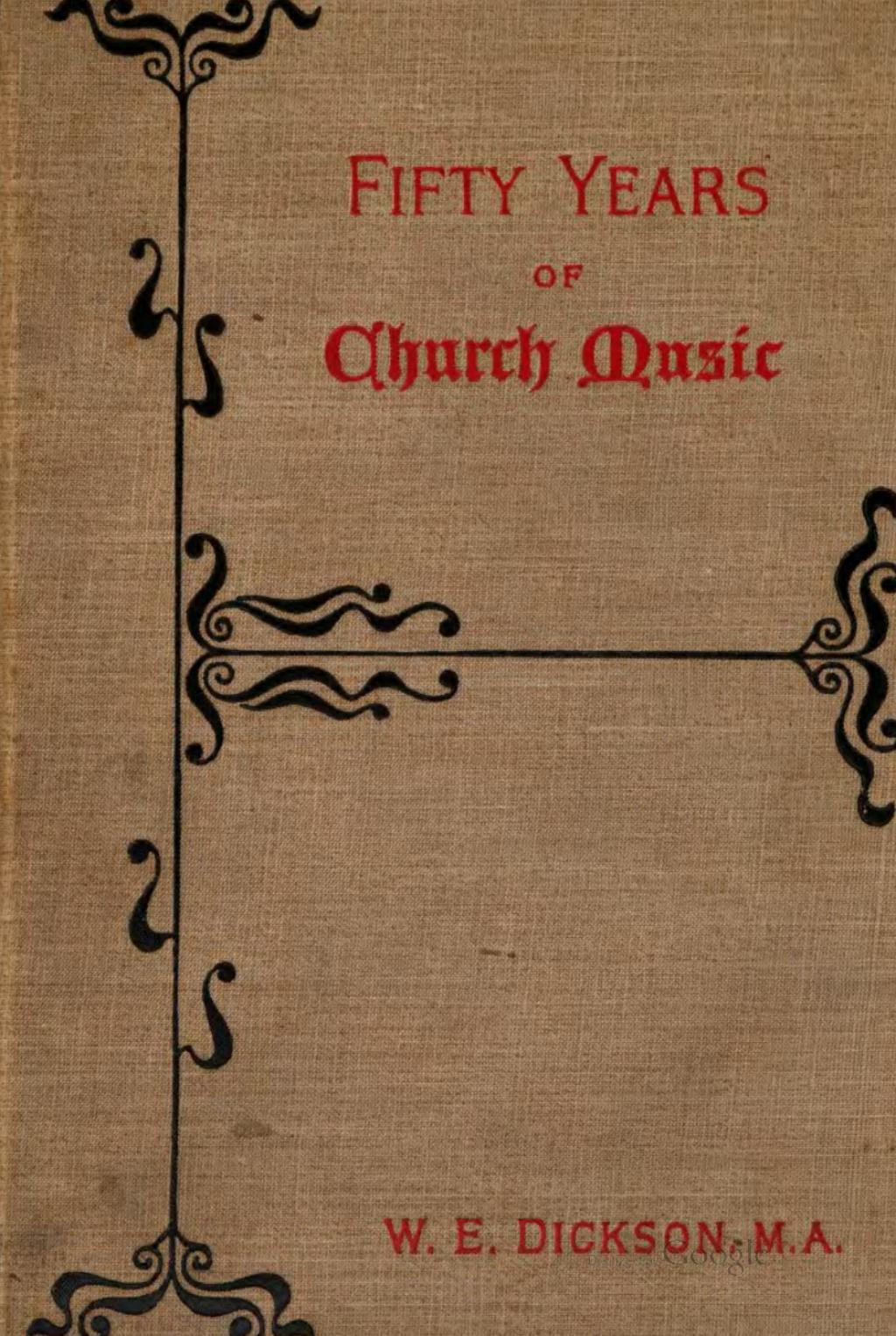
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FIFTY YEARS
OF
Church Music

W. E. DICKSON, M.A.

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INTERIOR OF ELY CATHEDRAL IN 1843.

FROM A DRAWING BY HARRADEN.

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INTERIOR OF ELY CATHEDRAL IN 1418.

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FIFTY YEARS

OF

Church Music,

BY

W. E. DICKSON, M.A.

FLOREAT ECCLESIA ELIENSIS.

ELY :

PRINTED BY T. A. HILLS AND SON, MINSTER PLACE.

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1894.

FIFTY YEARS OF CHURCH MUSIC.

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PRELIMINARY.

"When the Regent was here, he declar'd in a hurry
"That Richmond in Yorkshire beat Richmond in Surrey."

Local Guide-book.

I take no sort of pride in the fact that I was born in the reign of King George the Fourth, for most certainly the period covered by that reign, namely 1820-1830, was not one of those which shine with brilliancy in the annals of England.

This humble chronicle has nothing to do with the causes, political or other, which contributed to bring about a low condition of the national life and character. Of the personal faults of the Sovereign, others have written plainly enough. The great novelist, in his "Four Georges," has not spared the First Gentleman of Europe. Yet there were plenty of good men and true whose loyalty blinded their eyes to these errors; and I recall now the portly form of one of them, a Rector, a Justice of the Peace, as he rises at the foot of his table, his wine-glass lifted above his head, with the sonorous toast, "The King! God bless him!"

Most properly is this stalwart champion of Royalty introduced in this my prefatory page, for he was the chief actor in the earliest event of my infancy, namely, my christening, which took place on the fifteenth of July, 1823, in the old grey parish-church of Richmond, that fairest of Yorkshire towns, crowned by its castle, and laved by the waters of Swale.



CHAPTER I.

1823—1833.

“All which details I have no doubt JONES, who reads this book at his club, will pronounce to be excessively foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental.”—THACKERAY—*Vanity Fair*.

In all that concerns the realm of Art, the decade ending with 1830 was barren and dreary, and in the department of Church-Music especially, the branch of Art with which I associate these Reminiscences, a very low standard of production and performance was attained even in cathedrals and collegiate churches possessing endowments for trained musicians, clerical and lay. Our church-music at Richmond was probably not ruder and more unlovely than that which might have been heard at any other church with similar claims to importance throughout the North Riding. An organ had been erected by subscription in 1809, and was amusingly described in the local guide-book as consisting of “three towers and two flats, with a Swell of the most pleasing effect.” It may have been about the year 1828 that I had the pleasure of being introduced to this castellated instrument on the occasion of a visit to it by my mother and sister. They were both sound players of the pianoforte, but had no acquaintance with the organ; their notion, dear souls, was that great rolling chords in the bass were the chief characteristic of the proper treatment of the instrument, and my astonish-

ment was extreme, and was not entirely un-mingled with awe, as I listened to the handfuls of notes pressed down by my sister, and as I perceived that the mighty tones did not die away, like those of the piano-forte, so long as the fingers remained upon the keys.

Our organist was a Miss Howson, a clever and brilliant performer in the style of her day. Her taste was florid; scale-passages abounded in the interludes which she introduced, according to usage, between the verses of the metrical psalms. Double shakes, and all other forms of nimble and dexterous ornamentation, were there in profusion. When she married, and left the town, we had a change for the worse; her successor, again a lady, was wofully unequal to her duties; but the bride paid us an early visit, and a crowd pressed to hear once more their popular towns-woman. She surpassed herself! and even now, sixty years afterwards, I recall the impression made upon me by the crowded aisles, and by the powerful tones of the organ in the brilliant voluntary which she dashed off at the conclusion of the evening service.

The style of playing universal in my early days will be understood by any musical reader who will take the trouble of examining such works as Nightingale's Choruses, or the earlier arrangements for the organ by Vincent Novello, or the editions of Handel's Oratorios by Dr. John Clarke: and there were plenty of excellent performers in this style both in London and in the provinces. English organs had no pedals. It is true that a few builders, notably the younger England, the builder of the Richmond organ, had made some

attempts to employ the feet of the player, as well as his hands, in the production of musical effects, but their pedals were very imperfect and defective both in construction and compass, and their experiments had awakened faint interest among the vast majority of organists, who made little or no use of the new contrivances, even when they found them in their organs, and at best only utilized them for holding down a ‘pedal point’ in the harmony, or for enriching the effect of a few final chords. During my holidays, which were sometimes spent near London, a few years later, I often listened to the playing of Mr. Nightingale himself at the Foundling Hospital; of Mr. Horsley, the well-known writer of glees, at another hospital in the Westminster Road; and of a most charming performer, Mr. Blackburn, at the parish church of Clapham. All these gentlemen, and especially the last-named, possessed the art of playing the organ with manuals only in the highest degree of perfection. It is greatly to be regretted that the effective management of organs without pedals should be among the lost arts at the present day. Why should not the clever manipulation of such organs be acquired by ladies, and by the modest and humble players in village churches, to whom the preludes and fugues which echo through the aisles of the cathedral must ever be a dead language?

It can hardly be doubted, that the performances of the illustrious Handel himself, as well as those of Worgan, of the blind Stanley, and of a host of others, must have been distinguished chiefly by smooth

fingering of rapid passages, such as those, for example, of the obbligato episodes in the Overture to "Saul." Their manipulation of the organ must have differed but little from their harpsichord-playing. It is one of the puzzles connected with Handel's career in this country that during his almost life-long residence he made no effort to reform, or improve, English organs upon the model of those of the country of his birth. He was perfectly well acquainted with the grand instruments of Germany, and with the compositions of Sebastian Bach, which could be performed on no organs of the English type, yet he made no attempt to introduce them here. The organ which he presented, as some say, or only designed according to others, for the Foundling Hospital in 1759, had no pedals.

It is quite possible that as regards quality of tone he may have preferred the gentler and more silvery *timbre* of English pipes to the bolder and more strident style of voicing prevalent in Germany. Mendelssohn, in our own day, is said to have expressed the same preference, and to have taken special delight in the organ of St. Peter's, Cornhill, a noble instrument built by Messrs. Hill & Son. But no attempt was made to combine German grandeur with English sweetness.

English organs, as a rule, were not only destitute of pedals, but were frequently incomplete as to their manual-basses. The contrivance called a "short octave" survived in a great number of instances within my recollection. This was an expedient for saving expense by the omission of several large pipes in the bass. Thus, if the lowest note were G, the next

above it would be not A, but C, while A would be played upon the key representing C-sharp. Moreover, even when the "long octave," as it was called, was introduced, one large pipe, namely, the G-sharp, was almost always omitted. From all this it will be seen that organs without pedals had their marked peculiarities, and that there was plenty of room for skill on the part of the player in making the most of the limited resources placed at his disposal. Some organists had the reputation of being very full players; this probably meant that they were in the habit of availing themselves to an unusual extent of the bass octave, whether it were long or short; and almost all found opportunities for exhibiting their adroitness in the execution of a variety of *fiorituri* now obsolete.

Our highest flights in 'Church Music' at Richmond reached no loftier elevation than Pope's Ode, "Vital spark of heavenly flame," to the music of Hargreaves, and Jackson's Te Deum in F. Once in each year, when the North York Militia were quartered in the town for their annual training, and came to church with their band, we were treated to Luther's Hymn, with solo trumpet obbligato between each couplet of the verses. The band, by the way, had a high reputation. One, at least, of the instruments included in it, is now obsolete, and a mere curiosity for a museum,—the Serpent, a bass instrument of wood, made to resemble the reptile whose name it bore, with several turns or convolutions. It has been superseded by the Ophicleide. All the drums were of the old long pattern, more sonorous than their modern successors.

CHAPTER II.

1833—1843.

“To White-Hall Chapel, * * * where I heard very good musique, the first that ever I remember to have heard the organs, and singing-men in surplices.”—*Mr. Pepys’ Diary*.

Such a book as this is nothing if it is not egotistical, discursive, and garrulous. Hence I deem no apology necessary for explaining here that though no sound musical ground-work could be founded upon our church-music, yet that in my home-training I was in excellent hands. I had lost my father, who had been a good amateur Violoncellist, and a promoter of gleesinging and chamber-music in Richmond; but to this day I possess many MS. copies of compositions of a high class written by him with marvellous neatness. My mother had been educated at York, and had had lessons from old Matthew Camidge, Organist of the Minster, and from Dr. John Camidge, his son and successor, and she had been well accustomed to play at sight, often from figured basses, and from the less common clefs. In these accomplishments my eldest sister attained great proficiency; and as I had shewn an early sensitiveness to musical impressions, I was abundantly encouraged to cultivate a taste inherited from both parents.

My mother had been present at one of the Musical Festivals held in York Minster early in the century, at

which Catalani was the *prima donna*. The impression made upon her by the great singer was not entirely favourable. She told us that the power and volume of the voice were wonderful, and the words admirably distinct; but that the reverence and gravity due to the sacred text were wanting. As an instance of this, she mentioned that Catalani declaimed the sublime passage "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" with an expression of countenance, and perceptible dramatic shudder, implying disgust or repulsion. The opening recitative of the "Messiah," with the following air, were given to the lady, although the great tenor, Braham, was then in his prime.

Concerts were rare in our quiet town; but I recall one, at which the chief performer was George Aspull, a boy of eleven or twelve years of age, wearing the frilled shirt-collar of the period, and round his neck a broad green riband, from which hung a medal, the gift of some Royal patron: an elder brother, of gentle and tender countenance, stood by him as if to encourage and support the child. After listening to several pieces, the audience were invited to hand up a theme, or themes, of a few bars, upon which the gifted boy might found an extemporaneous sonata. One of my aunts, a scientific musician though no performer, pencilled a few notes on the back of a letter, and placed it on the book-desk of the instrument. The boy, I was told, worked this up into a masterly piece, ending with a fugue. He did not live, poor lad, to give proof of mature genius: such precocity is ever short-lived.

Miss Howson's surprizing feats on the key-board of the organ were mildly ridiculed at our house, and I was brought up with a reverence for music of the grand classical style of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, as interpreted by J. B. Cramer and the teachers formed in his school. I had lessons on the violoncello from a sergeant of the North York, but the worthy fellow was not a born teacher, and I fear I was an idle pupil, for it was not until many years afterwards that the management of that most charming member of the stringed family of instruments became familiar to me.

And now occurred a great event in my life. My mother, with the musical daughter already mentioned, and a younger sister, had resided for some time in the South of Devon. I, left behind as a boarder in our Grammar School, was to join her for my Christmas holidays. It will hardly be believed, perhaps, that in that year,—I think 1836,—the journey from Richmond to Dawlish occupied the greater part of three days. The route was through Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol, and Exeter, with changes of coach and considerable delay at each of those places; and I may mention that on my return journey, in severe wintry weather, a great part of two nights was spent on the road. Such changes have elderly people lived to see! And long journeys in those days were costly affairs. I remember that my schoolmaster, after much consideration and turning over of road-books, put the sum of ten pounds for my fares into the hands of the much older schoolfellow who was to take charge of me as far as Bristol, and I doubt if I had much change out of

this on my arrival at Dawlish. But my friend Watkin Williams had taken inside places for me, and his notions of comfort in travelling were somewhat princely.

After a pleasant stay at Dawlish, then little more than a quiet village, my mother removed to Exeter, where we occupied lodgings in the Cathedral Yard, or Close; and here, like Mr. Pepys, I saw and heard singing-men in surplices for the first time in my life.—It might be a curious and interesting subject of enquiry, and we might arrive at some unexpected results, if we could analyse the impression made by the full choral service of a cathedral upon young persons hearing it for the first time. The old Scotch-woman's comment we all know:—Eh ! 'twas bonny ! but eh ! 'tis an awfu' way o' spending t' Sawbbath ! A great number of excellent people at Richmond would have echoed that gude wife's exclamation, or would have secretly cherished the thought which underlay it. A narrow school of theology was in the ascendant at that period in the town and neighbourhood, probably throughout the whole huge diocese of Chester, to which we belonged, and which was under the rule of the amiable John Bird Sumner, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. One of the cardinal tenets of this school was the strict observance of Sunday by abstinence from every form of pleasure. Most certainly our church services were not a source of pleasure to the younger folk of the place. The prayers were read, droned, or mumbled, sometimes preached or declaimed ; I much fear we were glad when they were over ! the organ-

playing and singing,—imperfect as this was,—was not without an element of enjoyment. But here, at Exeter, all was singing ! Each Amen, croaked at home by old Ralph Abdell, the clerk, was here a delight ; the Versicles and Responses a feast of heavenly harmony ; the Litany, sung by a Priest-Vicar and Lay-Vicar in unison, answered by the sweet voices of the highly-trained chorus, an embodiment of all that was seraphic. My younger sister and I had not arrived at an age of reasoning on such subjects ; but I have no doubt that at the close of that Exeter Sunday a vague doubt whether we had been '*at Church*' at all was present to our minds. At any rate, for the first time in our lives, we had had a Sunday of unmixed enjoyment.

The organist of Exeter Cathedral at this time was Samuel Sebastian Wesley, then a young man of twenty-six years of age. But he had already gained a very high reputation as a performer, and two of the most admirable of his masterly anthems, namely, "The Wilderness and the solitary place," and "Blessed be the God and Father," had been composed. The organ was one of great renown, being the only considerable work of its builder, John Loosemore, an Exeter man, whose name, with the date, 1665, appeared in gilded letters upon the handsome and stately case of dark oak. It stood (and still stands) upon the screen which divides the choir from the nave ; and against the pillars north and south of it were two groups of very large metal pipes, now removed, forming the bass octave of a Double Diapason. Such pipes were quite unique in their day, and attracted great attention : but a quaint

account of them by Roger North, in his *Life of the Lord Keeper Guilford*, leads us to suppose that their tone was very faint. When the organ was altered, and almost rebuilt, in 1859, it was found that each of the pipes had a "helper" behind it, that is to say, a pipe sounding its octave, for the purpose of starting its vibrations. But the organ had been in the hands of several builders long before that date, and probably before I heard it played by Mr. Wesley in 1836. I recal a majestic, grave tone, but nothing more; and I remember a face, belonging to a head with a profusion of dark hair, which appeared above the edge of the organ-loft at intervals during the service, and which, no doubt, was that of the distinguished player. We all know now, of course, that the performances to which we listened coldly were those of the finest player of his time and country. Of his time, I say advisedly, for Wesley, like his father and his uncle Charles, began his career before the days of pedal-organs, and to the end of his life preferred instruments of old-fashioned manual compass.

In 1839, I was placed under the charge of a tutor, resident in a Wiltshire village, near the town of Warminster. I only mention this because I found myself installed as honorary organist of a small church close by. The organ was a droll little imperfect affair, but I liked it much, and took great pleasure in playing it to the best of my ability, walking a mile and more across the squashy water-meads in all weathers to do so. The Hullah system of teaching Vocal Music was at that time much discussed by musical folk; we had a flourish-

ing class, or small choral Society, in our village, under the management of Mr. Webber, the vicar of an adjoining parish, and the possessor of a grand baritone voice, who afterwards became Succentor of St. Paul's Cathedral. We practised assiduously, and the familiarity with sight-reading, and with the use of the clefs, then acquired, has been of the greatest use to me through life.

It was at this time, too, that several visits were paid to Salisbury Cathedral. By an odd coincidence, on two or three successive occasions we heard the same anthem,—Clarke-Whitfeld's setting of the words "In Jewry is God known." The venerable A. T. Corfe was organist. He lived to a great age, and was found dead, when nearly 90, kneeling at his bed-side, where he had said his last prayers. The organ was by Green, and of exquisite tone, truly charming as an accompaniment to voices: it has been replaced by an immense modern instrument, out of all proportion to the purposes for which it is required; and there are many who regret the disfigurement of the transepts of the noble church by the enormous pipes of the pedal organ, and by the blowing apparatus. At Exeter the same mistake has been made. We English folk are always running into extremes, especially in artistic matters, and have yet to learn to know where and when to stop.

CHAPTER III.

1843—1846.

“There wee saw and heard a faire, large, high organ, newly built, richly gilt, carv'd, and painted : and deep and sweet snowy row of quiristers.”

Tour of a Norwich Captaine, Lieutenant, and Ancient, 1634.

With this chapter the record of my fifty years' experience in Church Music properly commences, for I write in 1893, and all which has thus far been jotted down has been by way of introduction. I had been entered at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and had ‘come up’ (according to the accepted jargon) in the autumn of 1842 : and not many weeks had elapsed before I found myself mixed up with the preparation and performance of church music to an extent which in my wildest dreams I had never allowed myself to anticipate. Perhaps I ought to premise that on my way to Cambridge I had had a refreshing foretaste of choral services in London. The relative whose guest I was for several weeks, a City banker, was accustomed to walk from his house at Clapham to his place of business in Fleet Street every morning at an early hour. This early walk suited me exactly ; for after escorting him to his desk, I found myself in good time for the ten o'clock service in Westminster Abbey, and the officials themselves were not much more regular in their attendance than I was. Mr. James Turle, the organist, was one of those musicians who had willingly accepted the addition of a

pedal-board to the organ of English type long before he came to Westminster, and who knew how to combine the use of it, imperfect as it was, with the manual-playing of an earlier date. The instrument, built by Schmidt's son-in-law, the "musical Kit Schreider," had that peculiar tone of refinement and purity which we seem to have lost in these days of heavy wind-pressure and equal temperament. The combination, "Full without reeds" was of a silvery sweetness never heard in organs of the present day; I imagine that the Mixtures were of small scale, and they invariably included the Tierce and its octave, now generally omitted. Mr. Turle was in the habit of using this combination freely in the accompaniment of the voices, and it suited admirably the style of music exclusively in use at the Abbey, which was that of the strict ecclesiastical school. The Services of Aldrich, Gibbons, and Rogers, were often heard at Mattins and Even-Song on Sundays, most effectively rendered by the choir of twelve lay-clerks and as many boys. The anthem was usually by Boyce, Croft, Greene, or the mighty Purcell. The same remarks are fairly applicable to St. Paul's, which now and then tempted me away from the beloved Abbey; but the attendance of lay-clerks at that time was very irregular. Mr. Goss and his assistant Mr. George Cooper probably tried to make up for this lack of vocal power by a super-abundance of organ tone. "The writer," says Sir John Sutton, in his Short account of organs, published in 1847, "has often heard the greater part of the choral service in this cathedral accompanied on the full organ." I can

confirm this, and may add that these eminent organists were fond of the tone of the full choir-organ, while the Swell was very sparingly used.

This London course of cathedral services had been of great use to me, and when I arrived at Cambridge, and found myself the happy possessor of a set of rooms in the old court of Corpus Christi College, I needed no introduction to a considerable number of the compositions in use in the college chapels which maintained a choral service.

These chapels were three, and only three, namely those of King's, Trinity, and St. John's Colleges, though Peterhouse indulged its men with a little music of a humble kind on Sunday evenings. At all the other colleges the daily prayers, (which the men were compelled to attend), were dreary in the extreme, being simply read in parson-and-clerk fashion. Although there were three chapels with choral foundations, the provision made for the maintenance of the musical services was most meagre and insufficient. There was really but one choir of lay-clerks, and those only six in number, and some of them elderly; they hastened from chapel to chapel, taking part, on Sundays, in no fewer than six repetitions of the Morning and Evening Service. A single organist had shared with them this almost incredible drudgery: but in 1842 King's College had engaged a player of its own as deputy for Mr. John Pratt, the organist, who had grown old and infirm in their service. Mr. Pratt had been a pupil of Dr. Randall, who had sung as a boy, and played as a

young man, in the chorus and band of Handel ; and he himself was a link with the past, keeping up the style of dress and manners in vogue when George the Third was king, and caring little for modern fashions in music or in anything else around him. His deputy, whom I will call Mr. Watson, had been a boy in the choir of the College. Those were days in which an education of a liberal or even of a reasonably useful kind was not to be had in the school maintained for the boys ; and as the choristers were employed as assistant waiters at the daily dinner in the Hall, it was not likely that the College could attract recruits for its choir from among the children of tradesmen, still less of musicians or of other professional men ; but I am bound to declare that the lads, though rough in their manners, were honest and truthful, and anxious to please their masters. I had ample opportunities for forming a correct judgment of them, for Watson, discovering that I could play from the old scores, and from figured basses, soon asked me to assist him in rehearsing the music for the chapel service. The rehearsal was held each day in St. Mary's church,—an extremely bad arrangement, but this was not Watson's fault. Perhaps, too, it was not his fault, but that of his own very imperfect training, that he was excessively harsh in his manner towards the boys ; the rehearsal was often a scene of violent scoldings, most unsuited to the sacred place, and to the sacred subjects of the music. More than once, some time afterwards, when on familiar terms with Watson, I threatened in a half joking, half serious, manner, to withdraw entirely from these stormy practisings ; and I believe

the poor lads were glad when he did not appear at the usual hour, and when they found that their lesson was to be given by the *deputy's deputy*, for I certainly did not scold them, but tried to interest them in their work by explanation and encouragement. Greatly desiring to convey to my readers a faithful impression of the state of Church Music at Cambridge in 1843, I must declare that a very imperfect and inferior rendering of the musical services was the natural result of such mismanagement of the choristers. Coming straight from the Abbey and from St. Paul's, innumerable short-comings of the choir at King's were painfully apparent to me. I am guilty of no exaggeration when I say that not one boy in the choir of sixteen could read his part at sight, or had any acquaintance with rules for the production of the voice, or had ever heard of phrasing, or was ever told to attend to marks of Expression. The Fellows of King's, however, made no complaints; by a strange anomaly, a layman, one of the seniors, occupied the stall of Vice-Provost in a College eminently ecclesiastical in its foundation, and had the control of the Chapel services; this gentleman acquiesced, so far as I could see, in the miserably low condition of the Divine Services thus strangely placed under his care, and no interference on his part with the tuition of the boys ever fell under my notice. Public opinion in the University and in the town was altogether laudatory of the music at King's. This is easily explained. The magnificent chapel has a resonance which lends a charm to any music performed under its lofty vault, quite independently of the artistic

merits or defects of the performance. The voices of the six lay-clerks, half of them worn out ; the ill-trained or un-trained voices of the boys ; these, supported by the majestic tones of the organ, produced an *ensemble* in that splendid building which satisfied the ears of uncritical listeners. Moreover, the style of music greatly favoured at King's contributed to the illusory result of acoustical resonance. Mr. Pratt had adapted English words to several movements from the Masses of Mozart and of Haydn : one of these, "Plead Thou my cause," may be heard in some choirs, I believe, to this day. Another very favourite anthem was an adaptation from the First Mass of Mozart,—"Praise the Lord, O my soul," introducing the exquisite melody to which the illustrious composer has set the words of the *Agnus Dei*. This anthem was sung before the Queen, on the occasion of her visit to Cambridge, as I shall shortly relate. Pratt's adaptations were made without the slightest regard to the original words, present to the mind of the composer ; even the order of sequence of movements was not respected ; but no matter ; these anthems were highly popular, and the number was small indeed of critics bold enough to question the propriety of the selection, or the style of its performance. Portions of Haydn's oratorio "The Creation" took their turn with many of the choruses from the works of Handel at the Sunday afternoon concert,—mis-called Service,—at King's ; as to the Prayers, they were read, and badly read, with a peculiar and deplorable accent. Did I say that the tones of the organ were majestic ? Let me amend that expression.

The organ possessed, indeed, a noble and majestic tone, but the style of playing was so utterly vicious that much of its grandeur was lost. Pratt belonged, of course, to the old school of manual-players : the organ, built by Avery in 1804, had had 'toe-pedals' as a part of its original structure, and 'German pedals' of imperfect compass had been substituted for them about the year 1834, but the elderly organist did not avail himself of them in any effective way. His deputy, however, contrived to graft upon the old style of playing a clumsy lumbering upon the pedals ; he had none of the neat manual dexterity which has been described in an earlier page of this book, while his pedalling was little less than ludicrous, and it would be quite impossible to convey to the mind of a modern organist any adequate idea of the vulgarity and tastelessness of poor Watson's accompaniment of the service, not only at King's, but at St. Mary's, the University Church, where he was again Mr. Pratt's deputy, and at St. Michael's, to which he was duly appointed as organist. In making these severe observations, it may be only common justice to remark that this worthy fellow, over-worked and ill-paid, (he played at Peterhouse also), may be said to have been unfortunate, together with many others, in belonging to a period of transition. Dr. E. J. Hopkins has graphically described the difficulties encountered (and overcome) by himself and his compeers during the years which elapsed while old English organs were being slowly altered, and new ones built, to a more correct compass of manual and pedal. This great change was necessarily gradual. The prime

mover in it was Dr. Gauntlett, who found a powerful coadjutor in Mr. William Hill, the eminent organ-builder, head of a firm founded by Snetzler, and constructor of many fine instruments. These two bold innovators had already, in 1836, erected several large organs, with the compass universal throughout Germany, namely, with CC, the eight-feet note, as the lowest manual key, and with a pedal-organ carrying down the bass to CCC, the octave below this note ; yet even Mr. Hill himself had been compelled by a stronger will than his own to build a fine instrument for St. John's College in 1839, with an F-compass of keyboards and pedals : and in 1841, an organ by another London maker, much praised and admired, had been placed in the gallery of St. Michael's church, having a compass and contents nearly identical with those of the Richmond organ of 1809, *plus* a single octave of pedals and unison pipes. More than ten years later Mr. Henry Willis, under the despotic control of Dr. S. S. Wesley, constructed the immense instrument in St. George's Hall at Liverpool with manuals of the old English range, commencing with GG. Some allowance should be made, no doubt, for the unfortunate Watson and others like him, who may be said to have been as it were a *tertium quid* between expert fingerers of manuals and sound pedallists. To this I will add that the publication of church music with arranged organ-part had not then begun. All the music in regular use at King's was played from MS. copies, admirably written by Mr. Pratt, but giving only the upper vocal part, with a figured bass beneath it. The placing of the

chords, in such a case, was left to the player; and it may easily be imagined that when his taste was defective and his learning scanty, the placing might have unpleasing results. Poor Watson's chords were often so placed that his left hand was engaged with the lowest notes of the key-board, while his right was busy with high treble notes, leaving all the valuable middle sounds mute. All this by way of explanation and apology. The fact remains unshaken that the much-vaunted music at King's in 1842,3 was radically bad.

A very different account can be given of the choral Service at Trinity College. Thomas Attwood Walmisley had been elected in 1833, when only nineteen years of age, organist of Trinity and of St. John's Colleges. In 1836 he had become Professor of Music in the University, and he graduated afterwards as B.A. and M.A. in the regular course, giving proof in his examinations of much intellectual power.

My references to him will be facilitated if I mention here that I had had the honour of an introduction to him at the rooms of my friend John Sutton, of Jesus College. Mr. Sutton possessed a very curious and interesting chamber-organ by Schmidt, quite unaltered, and in perfect repair. It had two manuals, so peculiarly constructed that a player unaccustomed to them might find his fingers *under* the keys instead of pressing on them: the lower key-board commanded three sets of pipes in oak, of most refined tone; the upper row had three metal stops, and the six sets of pipes, united on this manual by a coupler, formed a miniature 'Great

Organ' of surprizing brilliancy and sprightliness. It was necessary to stand while playing this quaint old organ, and to supply the wind by the foot. Mr. Sutton* led the life of a recluse; but occasionally he invited a few of us to little concerts in his rooms, and it was at one of these that I was introduced to Walmisley. Two or three boys, and two or three men of the Trinity choir were present,—one of these was Machin, afterwards well known as a good bass vocalist; the Professor had brought under his arm some copies of Spohr's "Last Judgment," then little known in England, the English translation, by Edward Taylor, of Norwich, having been but recently printed. Every musician who glances at these pages will appreciate the difficulty of accompanying the voices in Spohr's music on the little quaint organ described above: more than one of my readers, perhaps, would have recoiled from the attempt. Probably the Professor regretted the absence of a piano-forte, but he was one of those gifted men to whom victory over difficulties is in itself, and for its own sake, the highest of enjoyments, and not a word of complaint did he utter as he stood at the instrument, manipulating the curious keys with the most perfect smoothness and skill. I had never before heard a note of Spohr's music; the impression made upon me now by this quiet rehearsal of it is quite indescribable. The heavenly beauty of some of the movements haunted me for many days afterwards, sweetly and accurately sung, as they were, I believe at sight, by the small choir, and since that evening I have never ceased to be

* Afterwards Sir John, see p. 16.

an ardent admirer of that most sacred and solemn work. After the oratorio, the Professor, still full of energy, extemporized for some time, delighting us all by his clever imitations of the Fantasies of Bull and Gibbons, and ending with a fugue. At the subsequent supper, he was a charming companion, full of anecdote and lively repartee, kind to the boys, whose position was conspicuously and incomparably superior to that of their over-driven brethren at King's. Not one of these last would have been capable of singing the difficult intervals of Spohr's vocal parts; and if nothing else were now said, the immense difference between the renderings of the choral Services at the two chapels must be apparent to every musical reader..

My position as an undergraduate in his first year did not entitle me to hope for intimate friendship with Walmisley: now and then, however, I found myself in the organ-loft at Trinity. The instrument had been built by Schmidt, in 1708, but finished and voiced after his death by his son-in-law Schreider; it had been greatly altered, however, in 1834, by Gray, who had carried out the suggestions, and perhaps here and there the whimsical fancies of the young organist.* It had a pedal-board of two octaves, from CCC to tenor C; the Swell had been carried down to G-gamut: the wind-pressure had been increased, and the pipes re-

*Among these was a coupler which united the pedals with the *upper octaves* of the choir-organ. It was said that Walmisley introduced this for the sole purpose of playing the melody of the National Anthem in his godfather Attwood's fine composition written for the Coronation of K. George IV, "I was glad, etc."

voiced to it ; hence it had entirely lost the sweet quality of Schreider's organ at Westminster, though it had gained an addition of volume and power. The chapel, ceiled with a flat roof of wood, had but little resonance ; and when it was filled by some 500 men in surplices,—a very remarkable sight, especially as seen from the organ-loft,—the sound of the few voices of the choir was much deadened. The selection of the music rested with the Professor. One of his predecessors, Samuel Matthews, like Pratt, had adapted English words to movements from the great German composers, and these were occasionally heard at Trinity ; but Walmisley's own leanings were towards the Anglican school of Cathedral music, as represented by Boyce, Croft, Greene, Hayes, and perhaps Kent ; and he himself was the author of four or more complete Services, and of several anthems of great excellence, worthy rivals of those produced by his contemporary, Wesley. Among these may be specially mentioned the Service in B flat, and the anthem "If the Lord Himself," with the beautiful quartett, "Our soul is escaped even as a bird, &c." I had the good fortune to be present at an evening service in Trinity when his Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in D major were sung for the first time. The distinguished master of the College, Dr. Whewell, and the scarcely less distinguished Professor, walked up and down the ante-chapel for some minutes before the service commenced, and I wish that it were in my power to place before the eyes of my readers the portraits of these two remarkable men as they are present to my own mind.

The composer was warmly congratulated, afterwards,

on his vigorous and masterly work, and it was forthwith sung, from MS. copies, at Ely and perhaps elsewhere, but was not printed until after his death in 1856. Many of us made our first acquaintance with the works of Sebastian Bach by hearing them performed by Walmisley in the chapel. I do not recall the great pedal-fugues ; they could not have been played without awkward transpositions upon a pedal-board of twenty-five notes ; but most of the "Forty-eight" became familiar to us as executed with great skill on the organ.

At the service at St. John's I believe I was only once present. It is not a little singular that after altering the Trinity organ to a C compass of manual and pedal, Walmisley should have promoted the erection of an F organ in the adjoining College. So it was, however. The instrument, one of very fine tone by Mr. William Hill, built in 1839, had Great and Choir manuals to FFF, the 12-feet note ; the Swell descended to FF. A coupler, uniting the Swell to the Great in the octave above, was a great novelty, and may have been almost unique at that time in England.

The Psalms were sung in all the Cambridge choirs from the Prayer-book only, without the aid of pointing. A pointed Psalter,—possibly the first attempt of the kind,—had been published by Mr. Robert Janes, organist of Ely Cathedral, in 1837. He had had the great advantage and privilege of receiving hints from the learned Dr. Mill, Regius Professor of Hebrew, and Canon of Ely, and his book—though much revised—is still in use. But it was never adopted at Cambridge.

The chants were of course Anglican, single and double, for the revival of the ancient Plain-Song, though not far distant, had not yet reached us, and if the vague word ‘Gregorian’ was in use, it was only as applied to those barred chants in Anglican form, such as that so well known as Tallis’, founded on the ancient Tones, though having none of their freedom and spirit. But on this head I shall have more to say.

I was not a member of the orchestra of the University Musical Society,* distrusting too much, at that time, my ’cello-playing, but seldom missed their concerts. A great acquisition to their forces made his appearance about this date in the person of Alfred Pollock, an amateur oboe-player, of whose powers Walmisley thought so highly that he wrote some charming pieces for him with piano-forte accompaniment. One of these I heard him play on the Corno Inglese. The plaintive cantilena suited exactly the peculiar wailing tone of that beautiful instrument. The society was rather strong at that time; William Blow was a brilliant violinist; the violoncello was safe in the hands of Edward Cridge. But the most conspicuous figure in the orchestra was that of John Dykes, afterwards Precentor of Durham, and known far and wide by the many original hymn-tunes with which he has enriched the parochial Services of the Church. He was conductor, pianist, pleasant singer of old English ballads; in short, the ‘handy man’ of the Society.

* Then called the “Peterhouse,” but practically recruited from the University at large.

The Hullah System of teaching vocal music, which had lured some of us on to pleasant efforts in Wiltshire, as already related, met with disciples of great note in Cambridge. The Master of Trinity himself sang, or tried to sing, in a class conducted by the Professor of Music, and Senior Wranglers might be seen poring over the same part-book with their undergraduate pupils. The *furore* did not last long. But many years afterwards, when I was conducting a Madrigal Society at Ely, a dignified clergyman asked leave to add his voice to those of the tenors, and I was much amused to hear him say that he acquired the art of singing at sight by assiduous attention to Walmisley's teaching at this class.

CHAPTER IV.

1843—1848.

“At once the shock unseated him; he flew
“Sheer o'er the craggy barrier.” The Task. Bk. vi.

My first Long Vacation, namely that of 1843, was spent at Lyme Regis, a picturesque little town on the coast of Dorset, close to Devonshire, reached at that time by a charming coach-drive of some thirty miles from Taunton. The cliffs are of imposing height, and at a distance of some two or three miles from the town lies the curious cleft or chasm known as the “Land-slip,” formed by the subsidence of the soil over a large area, and full of interest for geologists. Lyme Church was furnished with an organ by Robson, a very indifferent instrument of the usual pattern, with a G-manual lacking the lowest sharp, a Swell to fiddle G, and one octave of pull-down pedals. Bad as it was, it was better than no organ at all, and I gave much employment to bellows-blowers; but a most welcome visitor interrupted my practice one day, namely, no less a personage than Mr. Turle, the organist of Westminster Abbey, to whose accompaniment of the service I had so often listened in the summer and autumn of the previous year. He was a guest at a house in the town, and with him was his brother, Mr. Richard Turle, organist of Armagh Cathedral. With the most genial

goodnature Mr. Turle seated himself at the wretched little instrument, and brought out its best tones. He contrived to play Handel's Overture to Esther, not without jocular anathemas upon the short Swell, and upon the absence of G-sharp from the pedals. His brother shewed less patience, and soon gave up the attempt to play. When Mr. Turle visited us many years afterwards, perhaps in 1876, he was much amused and gratified by being reminded of this incident. Nor is this the only circumstance which seems to me to justify a reference to Lyme Regis in this farrago of gossip about Church Music. The Vicar of Lyme, Dr. Frederick Parry Hodges, a Fellow of New College, (afterwards of Winchester), had published two volumes of hymn-tunes, many of them adapted from the works of great composers, not always in the best taste, but others written by his organist, Henry Bennett, whose name I am glad to mention with honour, and to rescue, perhaps, from complete oblivion. His tunes were printed in an imperfect form, for only the melody was sung by the young girls and children who formed the choir: but some of them were properly scored a few years ago, and give proof of unquestionable power and originality. As sung in Lyme church, these and other tunes from the book were undoubtedly impressive and devotional, and perhaps such singing may be said to have marked a period of progress towards the improved conditions of the present day.

I am tempted to digress here by describing a terrible and melancholy event of which I was an eye-witness.

On a glorious morning of bright sunshine, the last day but one of August, the inhabitants of Lyme were thrown into excitement by the appearance on the waters of the Channel, and rather closer in-shore than was usual, of a royal yacht and other gallant vessels, having on board Her Majesty Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, on their way to visit King Louis Philippe at the Château d'Eu, near Tréport. A prettier sight could not be imagined, as seen from the "Cobb," the rude and very ancient pier or sea-wall of rough stones which encloses the little port. But many of the inhabitants hastened to the upper part of the steep hill on which the town stands, in order to enjoy a still better view from the high ground; and a few, who could command the use of a carriage, ordered it out, and were driven towards the Landslip, whence a last loyal cheer might have a faint chance of being heard, and a last waving of handkerchiefs perhaps noticed, on board the flotilla. There had been a rumour, indeed, that the Royal party might possibly come ashore to examine the curious cleft. I was one of those who drove a carriage, containing three ladies, towards this coign of vantage.

Among the visitors to Lyme were two gentlemen, brothers, to whom I will give the fictitious name of Van Roos: they were natives of Holland, and were said to be wealthy: at any rate, they lived in good style, and were often seen well mounted. These gentlemen, like ourselves, were now speeding towards the Landslip, the elder in a carriage with ladies, the

younger on horseback, and we arrived at the same moment at a gate which admitted to a wide sweep of short turf, bounded by the edge of the cliff. There, at sea, within a mile or so, steamed on the Royal fleet. But a fearful catastrophe had just occurred under that bright sun and amid those cheerful surroundings. All were gazing at the pretty sight, when the thud of a horse's feet on the turf had fallen on their ears, and they had seen the younger Van Roos careering at headlong speed away from his brother's carriage, and towards the dangerous edge. His horse had evidently bolted with him. There was hardly time for the low cry of terror which broke from the ladies, when the horse, within a few feet of the brink, swerved violently to the right, and with a sharp curve regained a track of safety. But the saddle was empty! Whether the unfortunate rider had been unseated by the sudden recoil of the horse, or whether he had attempted to throw himself off in the supreme moment of danger, can never be known. He had come to the ground, in either case; had rolled down a few feet of steep grassy slope, and had plunged over the edge of the precipice upon a mass of rocky fragments, interspersed with bushes, forming an under-cliff some hundred feet below.

Confiding our carriage to a rustic lad, I ran with breathless haste across the field, and perceiving a rude zig-zag path leading downwards towards the beach, flung myself along it, and reached the side of the poor fellow. There he lay! one leg doubled under him in a way which shewed that it was frightfully broken;

the pale features lacerated by the bushes and brambles among which he had fallen. A tradesman of the town, whom I knew well, arrived almost at the same moment as myself ; he had come to the under-cliff with a picnic party, and now ran up bringing a pocket-flask of brandy. We twisted a leaf into the form of a cup or funnel, and tried to introduce it between the colourless lips of the dying man, but all was useless,—with one slight moan, he ceased to live. So dismally ended a day begun with hilarity !

Happily no tragic incident marred the Royal Progress with which I was next concerned. On the 25th of October, amid the vociferous cheers of her loyal subjects, *in statu pupillari*, and otherwise, a surging crowd of be-gowned students and citizens, Her Majesty and Prince Albert drove through the streets of Cambridge in their travelling carriage to their quarters in Trinity College. They had made the journey by road in those pre-railway days, and a comic feature was presented by the jaded and blown condition of the yeomanry escort which had essayed the task of keeping up with the carriage at the pace maintained by the royal postilions. This chronicle has to do chiefly with musical affairs. I pass over, therefore, all other incidents of the visit, in order to mention that in the afternoon the illustrious guests proceeded to King's College Chapel. They were ushered along a passage or gangway constructed in the ante-chapel throughout its entire length, and covered and carpeted with crimson cloth, to a throne draped in the same colour, and placed on a platform

in the centre of the sacrarium or presbytery of the chapel, *with its back to the altar*, and facing West. Every other part of the splendid building was thronged by sight-seers, admitted by ticket, and I was among the fortunate in obtaining an excellent place. Mr. Pratt had been persuaded to climb, once more, the steps of the organ-loft, and to ‘preside’ at the organ, still almost new, perhaps, in his eyes, for he had been appointed to his office in 1799, five years before the instrument was built.* I listened with great interest to the playing of this old gentleman, the pupil of one who had been familiar with the performances of Handel. It was vastly smoother than that of his deputy, but I noted none of the refinements of the London players mentioned in a former chapter; there was no pedalling, of course, and no use was made of the Swell, to the best of my recollection. The music to the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* was his own, in the key of E flat, a pleasing and tuneful composition, still in use; and the anthem was the adaptation by himself of three movements from the First Mass of Mozart, to the words, “Praise the Lord, O my soul.” The beautiful air of the *Agnus Dei* was sung with confidence and courage by a boy named Barton. That he sang it with style and finish I cannot affirm, but his voice rang through the chapel, and he was much praised afterwards by his friends and masters. Mr. Pratt thundered out Handel’s “*Zadok the Priest*” as the young Queen

* The late Mr. Janes, of Ely, up to the time of his death in 1867, was accustomed to speak of the Cathedral organ, built in 1831, as quite a new instrument.

passed along to the West door, the Provost and Senior Fellows walking backwards before her, and occasionally stumbling as they trod upon their gowns. Mr. Pratt played no more after this effort, but he survived it until March, 1856.

I believe it was in the winter vacation of this year that I was present at a concert on a large scale in Drury Lane theatre, where I had the good fortune to see and hear the veteran Braham, greatest of English tenors. He was now about seventy years of age, having been born in 1774; and he wore the dress of a long past day, the blue coat with large gilt buttons, the buff waistcoat, the large shirt-frill. I had the good fortune, I say, to *see* the great singer; for the theatre was so crammed that on our arrival a little late we were conducted to the wings of the stage, and it happened that I stood close to the door by which the artists entered when their turn to sing came round. Thus it was that I was the admiring neighbour of Mr. Braham during some ten minutes while Henry Russell was in possession of the stage, and was singing his "Gambler's wife" to the entire satisfaction of the occupants of the gallery. Braham listened with great attention to the younger tenor, and now and then muttered audible soliloquies, somewhat thus:—"Ha! a good G sharp!—“H'm, very fair, very fair!”—Mr. Russell's exaggeration of the words "Hush! Hush!" in the song, (pronounced "*hersh*"), was very unpleasing to my presumptuous ears. What Braham thought of it, I could not guess. There was no exaggeration or questionable taste in his own singing! The voice, of course, once so command-

ing, was a wreck. But the pathos which he threw into the fine old nautical song “ ‘Twas in Trafalgar’s Bay,” roused the vast audience to enthusiasm. I was within a few feet of the old man as he stood on the stage, one hand thrust into the breast of his coat, the other now and then waving in the air the crumpled copy of the music. The attention of the audience was breathless as he declaimed the words of his next song, “The anchor’s weigh’d,” with a grave and even solemn impressiveness which no words can describe, and when he finished, with a wonderful *tour de force*, the applause was terrific ! Perhaps he was amused by the earnestness of the young fellow who thanked him with all his heart as he returned to the snug corner in the wings. He was succeeded by another well-known singer of the period, Henry Phillips, the leading baritone of his day. Mr. Phillips, like Russell, accompanied himself on the piano-forte ; his song was a sort of “Lützow’s Wild Chace,” representing a bear-hunt in the forest. The growling of the bears was well suggested by a passage for voice and instrument in clever combination, and the effect of this was much heightened by the droll frowning scowl with which Phillips glared round the house as he rendered it. We were all delighted with him.

But for sympathy and union between voice and instrument John Parry had probably no rival. It was at another concert that I heard him give his “Wanted, a governess,” and a clever song in which the line “Bits of Berlin wool” occurs several times. Parry had great powers as a pianist, and it was to his man-

agement of his accompaniments almost as much as to his inimitable vocalization that his brilliant success was due. The comic song, as invented or transformed by John Parry, was free from the slightest taint of vulgarity ; droll conceits and grotesque travesties were blended by him into a harmonious presentment of refined and polished humour, previously unknown.

At Exeter Hall, in the Strand, the Sacred Harmonic Society was under the baton of Mr. Joseph Surman. I had the happiness of hearing Clara Novello at her best, in the "Creation," and afterwards, on another occasion, in "Israel in Egypt," when her rendering of Miriam's song, unaccompanied, was magnificent, and only rivalled,—perhaps not surpassed,—by the declamation of the same passage by Jenny Lind a few years afterwards. An interesting personage in the orchestra was the veteran Lindley, the violoncellist. As First 'Cello, he was conspicuous in the very front of the platform, the more so, as failing sight compelled him to have special lights at his desk. The beautiful song, "In native worth," with its 'cello obbligato, was sung by Hobbs, and played by the veteran. At the close of their joint performance, the two artists exchanged a quiet shake of the hand, not un-noticed by the audience. The elder Harper was an incomparable solo-trumpeter at all great performances of oratorio at this time ; and Adam Leffler's grand voice was worthy of Harper's obbligato in "The trumpet shall sound." Leffler might have risen to great eminence as a vocalist if prudence and industry had been added to unquestionable ability.

and the gift of a bass voice of exceptionally fine quality and extensive compass. He had few rivals in his day as executant of the great song "Why do the nations?"

The performances of the Society, under Surman, with George Perry as leader, were characterised by power and energy rather than by thoughtful readings of the scores. But possibly a somewhat boisterous vigour would not have displeased the mighty Handel. It is certainly very doubtful if the 'colour' introduced into his works by Sir Michael Costa would have met with his approval. "For unto us a Child is born" was begun, continued, and ended *forte* if not *fortissimo* under the guidance of the worthy Surman.



CHAPTER V.

1848—1858.

“The Restoration of Churches the Restoration of Popery.”

Title of Sermon by Dean Close.

The Cambridge Camden Society had for its excellent and praiseworthy object the work which had aroused the militant Protestantism of Mr. Close of Cheltenham.* Its operations had borne conspicuous fruit in the town and neighbourhood of Cambridge for some three or four years before 1843: the very curious and interesting ‘Round Church’ (that of the St. Sepulchre) had been rescued from decay and degradation chiefly through the agency of this Society, and several of the most note-worthy village churches had been carefully inspected and measured. Accurate drawings of some of them had been made and lithographed; in 1844 these were published at the Society’s expense, forming a pretty and valuable volume, now scarce.

These proceedings were among the earliest steps in that remarkable movement with which the name of Oxford has been associated, and which has had such momentous and far-reaching results. Its history has

* The Rev. F. Close did not become Dean of Carlisle until 1856.

many most competent narrators, and this little record has no concern with its theological aspects; many of us, it may suffice to relate, became the admirers and disciples of the leaders of the movement in Cambridge, and there were not wanting signs of that increased and revived reverence for sacred places and sacred things which is so happy a characteristic of the Victorian age. The college chapels lay outside of the Camden Society's sphere of work; but even within their walls a desire for increased order and devotional adornment was showing itself. This craving for embellishment took unexpected forms now and then. Thus, in the chapel of my own college, our Bursar loaded the Communion-table, hitherto quite un-adorned, with a salver and other pieces of massive and costly gilt plate from the strong room of the college; and I fear that smiles were general when the Chapel-clerk, a shy man of small stature, his face suffused with blushes, collected our alms on this salver, which was nearly as large as an ordinary tea-tray, for the first time. Our few six-pences, cast into this huge dish, might be said to be

"Rari nantes in gurgite vasto."

If the men smiled, some of the dons were believed to have frowned; and soon began that series of controversies and wranglings over the external accidents of Divine Service which many of us deplore at the present day.

I recal, with tender respect and reverence, the grave astonishment of friends in the country when some of us, at home for our vacation, were seen to turn towards

the East when reciting the Creed, or were heard to object to sitting in a square ‘pue’ with our back to the altar, or expressed an aversion to pues in general, or urged on the Rector the duty of preaching in the surplice. These youthful eccentricities were discussed at the tea-tables of venerable church-women in a tone of serious mistrust and concern.

Of course, my compeers and I were glib with the verbiage of ecclesiastical architecture. Our friends, who had been content, all their lives, with the convenient generalities ‘Saxon’ and ‘Gothic,’ listened with blank faces to our chatter about ‘First Pointed,’ and ‘Transitional,’ and the like, and about mouldings and string-courses, and gargoyle, and poppy-heads. And when the conversation turned upon Church Music, strange words were heard, such as ‘Proses and Sequences,’ ‘Motetts and Antiphons,’ ‘Tonus Peregrinus’ and ‘Faux Bourdon.’ Where was all this to end, asked our bewildered elderly relatives. It was not until a few years later,* indeed that the publications of Mr. Thomas Helmore, (printed in the *nail-headed character*, the wags said), were in our hands; but already there was a strong leaning towards single chants, and towards a severe and colourless style of church music generally: the maxim, “That which is new is not good, and that which is good is not new” was received as an axiom: the principle of Self-denial and mortification of the flesh was applied to the music of the Church, and was held to exclude the elements

* i. e. in 1850 and 1851.

of Grace and Beauty from compositions dedicated to Religion as ministering only to sensuous pleasure. Sad nonsense all this ! but the way was being paved, nevertheless, for an association of Art with Religion to which this country had long been a stranger ; and many of our shallow young sciolists were to go down to country curacies with the wish and hope of introducing order and reverence where hitherto all had been rude.

I was one of them. After taking my degree in January, 1846, I had remained for a few months in Cambridge, and had been ordained at Christmas of that year to the curacy of a village bearing the odd name of Talk-o'-the-Hill, near the Potteries, in Staffordshire. But my friends thought me fortunate, and I thought myself so, when I was presented, at 24 years of age, and newly in Priest's Orders, to the incumbency of a rural parish in Cheshire, with a population entirely agricultural, an income sufficient for my wants, and a delightful bachelor's parsonage, with a pretty garden, nestling under the very eaves of the church. This last had been built in the reign of Queen Anne, and was an ugly structure of red brick ; but the interior fittings were of excellent though plain workmanship in oak panels, and the sacred building was entirely free from any signs of dilapidation or neglect. It stood upon a little knoll or eminence in the middle of the village, and a most venerable yew-tree over-shadowed the porch. The name of the hamlet, Goostrey, was said to be a corruption of 'God's Tree,' in allusion to this fine old yew, which may have furnished many a bow for the archers of long-past days.

And now began a decade of most happy years, to which I must ever look back with humble gratitude. The days were not long enough for my pleasant duties and favourite pursuits. One of these pursuits had been, from childhood, the use of mechanical tools; and now, my own master, with my house as my castle, the workshop supplied delightful occupation for all hours spared from parish work or the preparation of sermons. I embarked, with infinite zest, upon the business of Organ-building; and if any of my readers happen to have been born with the gift of constructive ingenuity, —(it can never be acquired),—they may hear without surprize that this delightful alliance of the musical and mechanical arts has not even yet lost its attraction, and that organ-pipes in various stages of growth encumber the corners of the room in which I write these pages. The little instrument on which I had played in the Wiltshire village church had become my own property; it formed the nucleus of an organ with two manuals and pedal; and this first ambitious attempt has had more successors than I care to acknowledge. The manuals, by the way, with black naturals and white sharps, very handsome and well-finished, had been taken out of an organ built about 1780 by the elder George England, and were kindly given to me by that excellent builder, Mr. Joseph Walker.* This Number One of my organs stood in a recess in my dining-room; I did not allow myself even to dream of building an organ for the church.

* These manuals had the 'short octave' in the bass.

My predecessor had been a zealous and successful parish-priest, but he was not musical, and had been content with the voices of two or three worthy women, no longer young, with the husband and brother of one of them, all singing the melody, and led by the nasal tones of a clarionet, as a 'choir' in the church.

Perhaps every new-comer in a village cure would have dreaded, as I did, the first steps towards disturbing these worthy people in the positions which they had occupied for many years. To disestablish the old singers, together with the ancient parish-clerk, who quavered out the responses, was a difficult and delicate matter, all the more that it involved disendowment also. Happily the good women had sons and nephews, still young. The first step was to enlist these lads as pupils in a Hullah class, meeting at my house in the evenings, after working hours. A Hullah class, do I say? well, let me rather call it a class for the practice of music published by Mr. Hullah. His "Psalter, A Collection of Psalm-tunes in 4 Parts," had been published in 1843; copies of the separate vocal parts of this sterling work were soon procured, and many of the grave and dignified melodies became familiar to the boys. The Alto Part of these was added ere long: the boys who sang it took great pride in their achievement, especially as it involved the mastery of a new clef, for John Hullah was not the man to encourage the lazy indolence of modern times, which uses the G and F clefs to the exclusion of all others. Coming events were casting their shadows before! All the villagers saw what was

impending ! No one was surprised when the two sets of boys, with the parson singing bass, made their commencement in church. The parson's bass was soon reinforced, however ; his satisfaction was genuine when the father and uncle of two of the boys, members of the old choir, presented themselves to begin the study of Part-singing, and brought with them a friend, a gamekeeper in the service of the squire. The clarionet player,—a right worthy fellow,—put away his instrument, and grappled boldly with the Tenor Clef : and now the new choir of eight Trebles, four Altos, two Tenors, two Basses, had fairly begun their work. Perhaps the effect of pure vocal harmony, without accompaniment, had never been heard in that church before. My own keen enjoyment of it was shared by the parishioners, high and low alike.

The practisings at the Parsonage became a most popular institution. Our guide, philosopher, and friend, Mr. Hullah, again supplied us with an abundance of high-class compositions in his "Part Music, Sacred and Secular," published between the years 1842 and 1845 ; again the use of the proper clefs for the inner parts gave an interest to the mastery of their difficulties, and contributed towards an intelligent appreciation of the true relations of the sounds forming the musical scale.

Perhaps I may venture to hope that here and there I may have a reader who finds himself or herself in a position somewhat similar to my own in those early days. To him or to her I may be of some humble use

if I mention here that all these honest rustics were taught to sing more or less confidently at sight without an instrument by one simple expedient, borrowed from Wilhem's method ; I mean, by the association of the five lines and the four spaces of the staff with the fingers and thumb of the left hand and the openings between them. The teacher, holding out his open hand, and sounding a key-note with his voice, requires the class to sing various intervals above or below that key-note as he points to the fingers or gaps representing the lines or spaces. From easy thirds, fourths, fifths, he goes on to difficult sevenths, ninths, and even wider distances ; the pupils, enjoying the exercise like a game, find themselves led on by imperceptible degrees to attack all the intervals which will ever occur in their vocal Part with resolution and confidence. The teacher must call out 'flat' or 'sharp' as occasion arises. After a life-long experience, I have never known this method of teaching the intervals fail to result in success, whether the learners be village plough-boys or cathedral choristers. The duration of notes and rests, in other words, correct time-keeping, is very easily learned under any intelligent teacher : and as to the *names* of the notes, I hope I shall be pardoned if I confess that in my opinion much ado is often made about nothing. Disciples of Hullah, we used the 'Fixed Do' system, in which Do is always C, Sol always G, and so on : this was done without the smallest prejudice against the 'Movable Do' system, with which I was well acquainted, in which Do is always the Tonic, Sol the Dominant, etc., etc. My pupils were told that systems

of Solmization are but crutches, to be thrown aside when lameness has been cured; whether the crutches be made of deal or of mahogany signifies little. As to the Tonic Sol-Fa system,—identical in principle with the movable Do,—it had not emerged from its cradle in 1849, and its very name was unknown to us. I am quite sure that its complicated hieroglyphics would have been regarded with derision by our rustics, who had found no serious difficulty in learning to sing at sight from the old notation.

The power of reading a vocal part having been acquired, and the pleasure of doing so realized, by our little band of singers, a desire to sing anthems in church was the natural and anticipated result. It was gratified by the compiling and printing of a selection of pieces, 31 in number, from which I give the following extracts, being the titles of compositions frequently sung in church :—

Attwood—Enter not into judgment.

Croft—God is gone up.

Farrant—Lord, for Thy tender.

Havergal—O Saviour of the world.

Reynolds—My God, my God.

Richardson—O how amiable.

Webbe—Praise the Lord, all ye angels.

Zingarelli—Go not far from me.

At a village concert, combined with high tea, many of our sacred and secular pieces were sung, and the local reputation of the choir rose to something like

celebrity! But our simple folk were not spoiled by success; when the time came for leaving them, in September, 1858, the church services had been kept up with full efficiency by the successors of the first set of boys, and by younger men, with the valuable aid of the master of newly-built schools.

A tempting offer had been made to me about the year 1850 or 1851, namely that of the Precentorship of Chester Cathedral. The Dean of Chester, Dr. Anson, had brought with him from Southwell Minster, his organist, Mr. Frederick Gunton, who had been brought up at Norwich. Mr. Gunton was a good musician and sound player of the 'middle period' between manual-organs and pedal-organs; under his management, the Chester services were orderly and careful; the choir, though numerically weak, was of good quality; the prayers, however, were read, not chanted. The offer of this post was tempting; but I could not persuade myself to leave my villagers. Now, however, the time had come when a most unexpected event was to open up quite another field of work.

CHAPTER VI.

1858—1863.

“ Merrily sung the monks within Ely,
“ When Canute the king rowed thereby :
“ ‘ Row me, knights, the shore along,
“ ‘ And listen we to these monks’ song.’ ”

Old Ballad.

There was a time, within the memory of aged persons living fifty years ago, when the Cathedral City of Ely was inaccessible in times of flood by travellers in wheeled carriages. The roads, or causeways, as they were more frequently called, of the district, sodden by the wintry rains, or by the thawing of the snows, became impassable, save for the sturdy fen-men, bred from childhood to push their way along the ‘droves’ or lanes intersecting the watery wastes. The Bishops of Ely, previous to the time of Bishop Mawson, (1754 to 1770), when journeying from London to their See amid the fens, were accustomed to leave their lumbering coach-and-six at Cambridge, and were rowed to Ely in their barge. A bishop of Ely, (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and Lord Chancellor), John Morton, (1479 to 1486), had been one of the first to perceive the immense advantages which must accrue from the drainage of the vast districts partially or wholly submerged in rainy seasons, and contributing nothing, save fish and water-fowl, to the sustenance of

the sparse population. He caused a canal, or out-fall, to be cut, forty miles in length, from near Peterborough to the sea, to collect and carry off the flood-waters: and it is on record that he "had a lofty brick tower built at Guyhirne, where the waters met, and up into that tower he would often go to over-see and set out the works.*" To this day the canal thus episcopally engineered is known as 'Morton's Leam.'

Three hundred years later,—for fen-men have ever been slow to welcome innovations,—Bishop Matthias Mawson, aided by large contributions from others, made or improved the road or causeway from Cambridge to Ely, and thus brought the ecclesiastical capital and the great seat of learning into closer relationship. Even so lately as in 1842, however, the intercourse between the two towns was fitful and intermittent. The stately pile of the great cathedral, looming in the distance like some huge vessel at sea, is visible from low eminences near Cambridge, and tempted a few of us, from time to time, to ride thither on horseback, or to join in making up a crew for the serious pull of twenty miles each way along the winding course of the river. Sometimes a house-boat was chartered, with a couple of stout horses yoked to the towing-rope. I remember a merry party, including ladies, thus conveyed, at which the musical talent of Charles Edward Horsley was conspicuous. He accompanied our songs and glees, with chords, *pizzicato*, on his violin, using it guitar-wise in a clever and charming manner,

* Smiles' Lives of the Engineers, vol. i; 29.

The Cathedral had been saved from positive ruin and downfall by tasteless but ingenious repairs, carried out with great mechanical skill by Richard Essex, an architect or builder of Cambridge, about the year 1770. The modern restorations, due mainly to the energy and highly-cultivated taste of Dr. George Peacock, Dean 1839 to 1858, had not been commenced in 1842, and when I paid my first visit to it in the winter of that year, riding over with a friend, the church was nearly in the same state in which Essex had left it. The interior,* as seen from the Western threshold, was certainly not less imposing than it is at this day, though it lacked the charm of colour and the finish of artistic detail which now regale the eye. The plain and even rude rafters of the Nave roof were not hidden by ceiling or vault; the massiveness of the walls appeared to be out of all proportion to the weight of the load which they carried; but I think my memory is not at fault when I record my impression that the sense of loftiness was conveyed to the mind even more forcibly than it is now. The organ, in a handsome case of Renaissance design and workmanship, stood upon a screen extending across the Quire at the same point at which the modern organ projects from the North Triforium; the six bays, to the east of this screen, now called the Presbytery, and known far and wide as perhaps the most perfect example existing of the pure Early English style, were fitted with the stalls and sub-stalls of the capitular and choral body; the altar was placed against the east wall, under a Grecian rere-dos in the wretched taste of the

* See Frontispiece.

last century. The exquisitely carved stall-work, dating from the fourteenth century, had been painted in imitation of mahogany ! The space thus enclosed for the daily service was a small part of the vast church ; to our eyes it appeared little larger than that of some of the college chapels of minor note ; the numerical strength of the vocal body, namely, four men and four boys on each side, appeared to be sufficient for an area so limited. My friend and I, on the occasion of this first visit, were much impressed by the quiet dignity and gravity of the service : we had been placed in the stalls, near to the distinguished Dean, and to the Canon-in-residence, the learned and venerable Dr. Mill. The two great scholars shared between them a bass copy of the music for the day.

Mr. Robert Janes had been elected organist in 1831, at the age of eighteen. He had been the first articled pupil of Dr. Zachariah Buck, of Norwich Cathedral ; he himself, of course, belonged to the English school of manual players. On his arrival at Ely, he had found an organ built by Gerard Smith in or about 1692, and repaired by Green and Byfield about a century later ; no Swell or Echo had been added to the original Great and Choir, and some of the front pipes had settled down so much at the feet that the precaution of tying them in their places with cords had been thought necessary. This venerable but decayed instrument, which had a peculiar compass, $A\acute{A}$ to d in alt, was forthwith replaced by a new and excellent organ from the factory of Messrs. Elliott and Hill, fitted into the handsome old cases ; it

was of the English type, then universally accepted as satisfactory by the best performers of the day, having G manuals (with G-sharp) and a Tenor-C Swell, together with 'German pedals,' and large 16-feet 'pedal pipes.' My friend and I made our way into the organ-loft, and were allowed to sit down to the keys, greatly relishing the tone of the fine instrument. Mr. Janes himself was not present, for he had a very large teaching connection in Norfolk and Suffolk; he was wont to relate, in later years, how he rode long distances on horseback to fulfil his engagements, and how he had arranged a pair of lamps, attached to his saddle like pistol-holsters, to light his lonely road at night through the fen country. Times are changed now! The income, expressed with four numerals, which the young teacher is said to have earned, will never again be poured into the pockets of an organist of Ely Cathedral.

Dr. Buck had possessed an extraordinary faculty for teaching boys to sing well. His pupil, following out his methods, was a sound and successful trainer of the Ely choir. Only four boys, as we have said, appeared on each side, but all of them seemed to me to be 'big lads' of thirteen or fourteen years of age; no doubt, young recruits were kept under training in the background. I have been assured by citizens of Ely who were choristers in 1831 and in several subsequent years that the attendance of four boys on each side was invariably maintained, and that the efficient execution of treble solos was seldom or never marred by the absence of a leading boy. When Spohr visited Norwich in

1839 for the purpose of conducting his ‘Calvary,’ he was brought to Ely by Professor Edward Taylor, and he has recorded in his Autobiography his approval of the performance of the choral service by a “choir of 16 voices.”*

This my first visit to Ely was in the winter of 1842. The friend with whom I rode reminded me several years afterwards that as we trotted back in the dark towards our Alma Mater, I expressed a strong desire to belong at a future day to that great church. Strange indeed, then, seemed the course of events which brought to me, after very little effort on my own part, in August, 1858, an official letter containing the offer of the place to which I had aspired while still a ‘freshman,’ sixteen years previously! Nay, the offer was far beyond those early aspirations. The letter had informed me that the Dean and Chapter of Ely had selected me as Precentor of their church; *per saltum*, and without serving previously as a Minor Canon, I was to find myself head of that orderly choir, with ample powers entrusted to me by the cathedral statutes.

No doubt, I had been training myself, though all unconsciously, for the duties to which I was thus unexpectedly invited. The drilling of choristers at Cambridge; the creation of a choir in Cheshire; my own

* The precentors and choir-masters of those days had not to contend with the attractions of excursion-trains and cheap trips. Under the changed conditions of the present times so small a choir would be found quite inadequate to meet the requirements of the daily service.

practice and study of musical science and art; even my organ-building; these were the paths by which I had arrived at the goal of my ambition.

In entering upon this portion of my Reminiscences, I desire to explain that as I have but one object in view in writing this book, namely, to chronicle the changes which have taken place in the condition of church music during half a century, I shall confine myself rigidly to a narrative of *events*, untinged by adverse criticism on the one hand, or by fulsome flattery on the other, of *persons* concerned in them. I trust I shall not forget the duty of rendering their just meed of gratitude to all who had helped to bring the cathedral choir into the good condition in which I found it, and who lent me a hearty and cheerful co-operation in leading it on to a state of still higher efficiency; but I shall abstain from reference to personal peculiarities or traits of character.

The aged Bishop of Ely, Dr. Thomas Turton, (Senior Wrangler in 1805), probably sate alone among occupants of the episcopal bench in the quality of composer of church music. He was the author of two Services, which had been printed in short score, a form not then common, and of several settings of the Sanctus and Kyrie in the Communion Service. These compositions were in use in the Cathedral, but I cannot say that I

thought them worthy of a place in lists containing the names of Byrd and Gibbons. Some metrical hymn-tunes, however, written by the Bishop, are certainly of more than average merit. He knew how to produce effect without modulation, a faculty by no means common. His fine tune, "St. Etheldreda," in the "Hymns Ancient and Modern," is a good example of this. Another, still in MS., is sung at Ely to the words,

"O Thou, from whom all goodness flows."

The Bishop's last appearance at any public function was on the occasion of the consecration of the new cemetery at Ely in 1860. As the venerable old man proceeded with tottering steps along the alleys of the burying ground, supported by the friendly arm of one of the Canons, his own solemn tune, just mentioned, was sung by the choir. His memory was so much impaired that he did not recognize it, but at a subsequent luncheon he was pleased to express his thanks for the little compliment which had been paid to him. On his death in 1864, Professor Edward Harold Browne was sent to rule over us as our Bishop. He had been a Canon of Exeter, where he had become familiar with the general management of a cathedral choir. Though no musician, he was a zealous supporter of our choral services, and a truly kind friend to all the members of the choral body, old and young, clerical and lay.

It may be convenient to mention here that on his translation to the See of Winchester in 1873, he was succeeded by Dr. James Russell Woodford, Vicar of Leeds. At Leeds the new Bishop had had experience

of choral service on a large scale, but carried on under conditions very different from those incident to a provincial cathedral; his great predecessor at Leeds, Dr. Hook, was wont jocosely to describe the service there in his time as ‘Decorated Parochial’; possibly this type of worship was, to the last, more acceptable to the Bishop than that of Ely.

The mention of Bishop Turton’s tunes reminds me to record here,—though it is not a personal reminiscence,—that up to the year 1843, the inhabitants of the city were accustomed to resort to the cathedral on Sunday mornings to hear the sermon only, the choral service having been sung in the Quire, and the prayers read in the two parish churches. Probably this was a survival of a very ancient custom. The space West of the organ-screen was known as the ‘Sermon-place,’ and was encumbered by benches of various patterns, some of them cushioned and baize-covered, and jealously claimed as pews by leading citizens and their families. The lay-clerks and boys ascended into the organ-loft, and sang a hymn, standing on its western side.

I soon discovered, and with great satisfaction, that my new post was not one of dignified ease and leisure. Once more, the days were not long enough for a happy mixture of duty and pleasure. A very few months had elapsed when changes in the *personnel* of the church led to my voluntary assumption of the office of Magister Choristarum. The arrangements for the general education as well as the musical training of the boys had

been put on a new footing in 1857 by Dean Peacock, acting on the strong representations of my predecessor in office. A school-room had been fitted up in a dis-used prebendal house ; the boys were removed from the Grammar-school, recently re-modelled, and no longer suited to their requirements ; this choir-day-school was entirely under my authority as its manager, the master being a member of the choir. Ultimately, under a new Dean, commodious buildings were erected, with a house for the master, a certificated teacher from one of the training colleges : the principal school-room was large and lofty, and the weekly rehearsals of the full choir were transferred from the organist's residence to these more convenient and suitable premises.

. The daily music-lesson of the boys was given by myself in person during the hour preceding the ten o'clock service : Mr. Janes had long ceased to give this lesson ; it had been left entirely to his articled pupils ; he had, indeed, virtually withdrawn from the active duties of his position, having become completely independent of professional earnings. The boys had profited much, however, from the lessons of Mr. Frederick Helmore, who conducted with great ability a choral Society to which they were permitted to belong. It was on the departure from Ely of this very competent teacher and vocalist that the entire training of the boys was undertaken by myself. The number of the choristers had been increased from eight to twelve by a former precentor. A further addition was now made, raising the number to sixteen with four probationers

under preparatory training : at the same time an attendance of fourteen men was secured on Sundays and special occasions by the engagement of young singers nominally volunteers, but really receiving a small annual stipend.

An excellent system of rehearsals had been established in 1842, when the stipends of the lay-clerks had been revised and considerably increased. Twice in each week, namely on the evenings of Monday and of Friday, the whole choir was brought together at the school-room ; Mr. Janes or his pupil sate at the piano-forte ; selections from the music appointed for the week were carefully sung. It was soon found that at the second rehearsal in each week ample leisure was afforded for the practice of compositions other than those appointed in the weekly lists ; some of these, indeed, belonged to another ritual ; a few were secular pieces. The boys, trained on the same system as the Cheshire villagers, became exceedingly expert readers at sight, not easily stopped by difficulties. My professional readers—if I have any such—will appreciate the condition of the choir at this time when I mention that large portions of Sebastian Bach's Six Motets were sung without accompaniment at these rehearsals, some of the movements being similarly given as anthems in the Service. Hearing that Palestrina's celebrated 'Missa Papæ Marcelli' had been sung in London under Mr. Thomas Helmore, we sent for copies, and enjoyed its grand harmonies, so manifestly the model followed by our Gibbons. I doubt if

any mistake worth notice was made in rendering this great mass at sight without the piano-forte. We amused ourselves by essaying eccentric feats ; thus, by employing boy-alti for the nonce, we contrived to sing the ‘Laudamus’ of Fasch, from his mass for four choirs. In 1859, Mr. Henry Smart had paid us a visit, and had charmed us all by his masterly performance on the organ : he thought us fortunate to the last degree in our possession of bi-weekly rehearsals. Ten years later he may have heard with astonishment that the second rehearsal was given up, after long and painful disputation, at the instance of Mr. Janes’ successor.

I have to record here that the distinguished Dean had died in November, 1858, not three months after I had entered on my duties. Richmond school-boys were proud to tell how George Peacock had been one of the brilliant band of pupils trained to ripe scholarship by James Tate, many years head-master, afterwards a Canon of St. Paul’s. Perhaps he himself had confessed to a generous pleasure in conferring my offices upon an *alumnus* of his old school in Yorkshire. Be that as it may, his kindness to me during our brief acquaintance must not pass without a grateful reference. The many friends who looked up to him with reverent affection loved to speak of him as *ἀναξ αὐδρῶν* ; truly as a ‘king of men’ he bore himself at Ely, leaving indelible traces of his powerful personal influence upon the city and cathedral alike. His funeral was the first large function which

I was required to conduct. We sang the time-honoured strains of Croft and Purcell, somewhat against the wish of Mr. Janes, who would have preferred the unison Plain-Song after Merbecke, printed in modern notation by himself, and used at the burial of Dr. Mill in the previous year.

The funeral was not long over when we heard that the Deanery was given to Mr. Harvey Goodwin, a well-known member of the University, who had been Second Wrangler in 1840; a successful preacher and energetic parish priest; a promoter of industrial and other schools in Cambridge; a man of vigorous intellect in the prime of life. He soon shewed us what we might expect in our special department by chanting the service with the inflections on the occasion of ‘reading himself in’; and I may mention here that during the whole period of his stay at Ely, eleven years, he was wont to sing the latter part of the Litany, commencing with the Lord’s Prayer, at each recurrence.

With the keen eye for small matters of detail which is always an accompaniment of high intelligence, the new Dean quickly espied the decrepit condition of many or most of the music-books in daily use. As in all the cathedrals, and in the college chapels, the choir-books were chiefly in manuscript; various copyists had been employed, some admirably neat and adroit, others clumsy and inaccurate; the books were old and much dilapidated, and were insufficient in number after the numerical strength of the choir had been largely reinforced. They encumbered the floor of the choir-mens’

sub-stalls, being often degraded to base purposes as foot-rests and the like. The Dean requested his right willing henchman to take immediate steps towards a reformation of this state of things: he saw that the time had come for the substitution of printed copies of published compositions for the antiquated manuscripts, and he authorised the expenditure of a considerable sum in the purchase of the new books. The whole collection of music, old and new, comprising several hundred volumes, was conveniently lodged upon shelves in a small vestry assigned to the choristers, and was carefully indexed and catalogued, a work occupying many weeks of assiduous labour. A binder was engaged, who established himself in a room within the precincts; all the old books, worth preserving, were repaired; the substitution of printed vocal parts for the old written copies was carried so far that eventually only three per cent. of the compositions in ordinary use were sung from manuscripts. Previously to this salutary reformation, this proportion of pen to print had been nearly reversed.

Five of the boys were appointed 'book-clerks,' receiving a little quarterly salary for carrying the books from the music-library to the Quire before the service on each morning; every man had his own book; extra copies were found for Minor Canons; the precentor's scores were under the care of the senior boy. I anticipate events by mentioning here that much of the music is now sung from the octavo copies in vocal score which have been so largely published of late years. Whether the art of ready sight-singing has been fostered by this

form of publication is a question into which I must not allow myself to enter. The small scores are handy and convenient; this advantage may be set off against the fact that they are a snare to the indolent singer, man or boy, who is spared the trouble of counting his rests. I am old-fashioned enough, moreover, to deplore the abandonment of the distinctive clefs.

The Cathedral is fortunate in possessing a valuable collection of manuscript Scores and part-books bequeathed to it by an indefatigable collector named James Hawkins, organist from 1682 until 1729, and forming an important link in the history of the Art. We were strongly urged by the well-known musical antiquary Dr. Jebb, and by the late Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, to print a catalogue of these treasures. The Dean and Chapter consented to do this, and the work was entrusted to myself. It was published in 1861, and copies were presented to the libraries of the other Cathedrals, and to those of Colleges having choral foundations.

The young organist had found a very imperfect rendering of the choral service on his assumption of office in 1831. With a praiseworthy desire to redeem the Versicles and Responses from the dull monotony of mere recitation, he set himself to harmonise the venerable forms for the choir, and commenced with the General Confession. But he proceeded no further, for the Minor Canons of the period threatened the youth of eighteen with dire penalties for presuming to ‘lengthen the service!’ We have reason, I think, to

be grateful to them, though we may not hold their motive in high honour; Ely had its ancient ‘Use,’ which had been silenced during sixty or seventy years of apathy and coldness, but when chanting was resumed in Dean Peacock’s time great embarrassment might have ensued if a modern set of Preces and Versicles had blocked the way to a resumption of the true Plain Song. The ‘Ely Confession,’ however, held its ground and is sung in many choirs. A new-comer, as I was, might be forgiven if he shrank from the odium of disusing the harmonies during the life-time of their author, but I regret to this day that those harmonies, however well conceived, should have been associated with a form of words in which all are invited to join ‘with humble voice.’

CHAPTER VII.

1863—1873.

“That vast-concording-Unity of the whole congregational-Chorus came (as I may say) Thundering in, even so, as it made the very Ground shake under us.” Master John Mace, 1676.

The wedding-day of the Prince of Wales, the 10th of March, 1863, was marked by a special Service, at which Handel’s Dettingen Te Deum was sung. Mr. Janes appeared in public for the last time on this occasion ; he was invited to conduct the choral body, strengthened by the voices of a few amateurs, from a desk in the Nave ; his expert assistant or deputy, Scott, was at the organ. The feebleness of his health was painfully apparent, and scant attention was paid to the irresolute movements of his *bâton* ; he survived, however, but in a suffering state, until the autumn of 1866, and was succeeded, early in the following Spring, by Dr. Edmund Thomas Chipp. There were many candidates for the vacant post, some of whom have since risen to eminence in other positions. On his arrival, I resigned into his hands the office of Magister Choristarum, not without regret. During his vacations, and even up to the date of the present writing, I have always willingly returned to the duties of that office, in which I have found nothing but pleasure.

Under the rule of our energetic Dean, a considerable multiplication of services was made about this time.

During the seasons of Advent and Lent, special Services were said and sung on the evenings of Wednesdays : at first these were unaccompanied, and of a very simple character, but as time went on, music of a high class was gradually added. I may mention among works thus introduced, the exquisite 'Seven Last Words' of Haydn, the 'Calvary' and 'Last Judgment' of Spohr, and many of the pieces composed in our own day by Gounod and others. The accompaniments were skilfully played by Dr. Chipp, who succeeded in overcoming the serious difficulty created by the distance intervening between the organ in the Quire, and the singers, placed in the Octagon, or eastern part of the nave.

The Dean himself was in the habit of attending our rehearsals, and of singing the Tenor Part, which he did with intelligence and effect. But we were deprived of him in 1869 by his promotion to the See of Carlisle, and we were placed under the gentle and courteous rule of one who still survives,* a great scholar and historian, honoured and revered in his old age by all around him.

A Society for the improvement of parochial Services by bringing choirs together, after diligent practice, at a grand function in some large church or cathedral had

* Dean Merivale died while these pages were passing through the press, Dec. 28th, 1893.

been formed at Cheadle, in the diocese of Lichfield, and had held its first festival in or before 1857. It is believed that Ely was the next to move in the same direction, the originator of the scheme being the vicar of a country parish in the diocese, Mr. Charles Warren. Dean Peacock had willingly granted his permission for the use of the cathedral in the autumn of 1858; the festival was held, under his successor, in the summer of 1859. A sermon was preached by Mr. Warren on the occasion from the curiously mis-applied text, "He that is feeble among them . . . shall be as David."* The Society still flourishes, and annual gatherings of parish choirs are still held in Cambridge and other centres of districts within the diocese, but since 1870 the cathedral has been the place of meeting in every third year only.

The promoters of the movement desired to include within its operations the humblest village choirs; they compiled and printed a book containing the choral Use of the cathedral, with chants for the Psalms and Canticles, good metrical hymns, and an easy anthem. This book, sold at a low price, was in the hands of choir-masters before the winter in each year, and every enrolled choir was subjected to an examination in the contents of the book by inspectors appointed by the Society before permission was granted to it to take a share in the service on the Festival-day in the ensuing summer.

This short description, which purposely avoids minute details, may be accepted as applicable to all the earlier

* Zech. xii. ; 8.

proceedings of the Society ; but of late years the book edited for the triennial meetings at Ely has included 'Services,' and also choruses and other compositions requiring the assistance of an orchestra, and instrumental pieces have been added to the music more strictly belonging to Divine Service.

The chief difficulty which beset us from the very first was unmanageable crowds at these festivals. In spite of the system of inspection or examination, it was found impossible to prevent the intrusion of very young children, and of adults whom I will call 'camp-followers,' into the ranks of the drilled choirs, indulgently included in the parish party by their clergyman, and pardonably intent upon enjoying a day's pleasure. The aggregate of the vocal forces on several occasions greatly exceeded one thousand ; but of these one-third, if not one-half, were often ineffective, and in truth a mischievous encumbrance. This serious difficulty was specially felt in the processional hymn with which these services invariably commenced. We were reduced almost to despair by our repeated failures ! Our neighbours at Peterborough had set up a choral festival of their own ; we heard high praises of their processional hymns, and some of us went over in a humble frame of mind to sit at their feet : we found conductors posted upon lofty *rostra*, and other arrangements which we could not bring ourselves to adopt, and which were inapplicable, indeed, to our case. Of late years, the difficulty has been partially or entirely overcome by restricting the number of singers actually moving in

procession, and by stationing trumpeters in the Nave, who are directed to obey the beat of the conductor at his distant desk, and whose penetrating blasts constrain even inattentive idlers to note the swing of the tune. A drum had been used with the same intent. But by some of us it was felt that measures of this kind are of doubtful propriety within sacred walls : we did not doubt that the operations of the Society, (of which I may venture to say *magna pars fui*) had effected a vast change for the better in the music of parochial churches in all parts of the diocese, but we were not equally convinced of the usefulness of these huge gatherings in the cathedral. And in these pages, written at a time when younger and more active workers have permitted me to retire to the position of by-stander, I may be allowed, perhaps, to express my fear that in the shape which these festivals have gradually assumed, the great and essential feature, that of WORSHIP, is in danger of being sacrificed to mere sensuous enjoyment of beautiful music. But on this point there is abundance of room for differences of opinion among persons whose reverence for sacred ordinances and sacred buildings is unquestionable.

A huge gathering was certainly quite in place at the celebration of the Bis-sexcentenary of St. Etheldreda's foundation of her Abbey of Ely in 673. The name of the great Saxon princess is commemorated in the

calendar of the English church on October 17th in each year. The festival of 1873, therefore, commenced on that day with a noble service, rendered by the full choral staff of the cathedral, aided by several lay-clerks from Cambridge, London, Peterborough, and Dublin, and it was continued on the three following days with the same vocal force and high musical excellence. On the fourth day, Tuesday, October 22nd, there was an immense influx of members of parish choirs and of other inhabitants of the diocese into the old city, bent on winding up the festival with all possible grandeur. Mendelssohn's Psalm, "Judge me, O God," was sung with marvellous effect by more than 1200 voices. That parish choirs should have been capable of rendering, even imperfectly, this great eight-part composition, might have been accepted as abundant proof of the success of the Society's labours; but the rendering was not imperfect; it would probably have given un-mixed pleasure to Mendelssohn himself.

Handel's grand anthem, "My heart is inditing," has become identified, at Ely, with the recurring anniversaries of St. Etheldreda: the exquisite verse, "Kings' daughters were among Thy honourable women" bids the citizens remember, as they listen, how much they owe the sainted princess. On certain special occasions, it has been accompanied by a small orchestra.

The music of the illustrious master had been largely represented in the anthem-lists or combination-papers

of the cathedral. Mr. Janes was an indefatigable copyist; among the results of his industry were complete sets of vocal part-books of the twelve anthems composed by Handel for the Duke of Chandos, with an organ-part to the whole, arranged from the score of Arnold's edition. Many selections from these master-pieces were sung at Ely; among them may be specially mentioned the beautiful tenor solo, "One thing have I desired," with the chorus, "I will offer." This solo had been admirably rendered by Mr. Wilbye Cooper, who had been a member of the choir. The finished style and great refinement of this accomplished artist was said to have produced the best effect upon the singing of the boys in his time. The short Te Deum written by Handel for Queen Caroline, consort of George II., had been similarly transcribed and arranged by Mr. Janes: this interesting composition depends largely for its success upon Alto voices, in which the choir had been strong. It is much to be wished that a modern edition of this Te Deum, and of the Chandos Anthems, might be undertaken by some musician thoroughly competent to grapple with the inevitable necessity of abridgement, transposition, and re-arrangement. Handel himself abridged and transposed the fine chorus "Tell it out among the heathen," (Anthem V.), for his oratorio, 'Belshazzar.' Dr. Boyce re-arranged the anthem "As pants the hart," (VIII.), with considerable alterations, for the Chapel Royal, by desire of George III. The modern editor might find most valuable suggestions in the treatment of such music by a musician so thoroughly sound and learned.

Many compositions, especially in the department of 'Services,' had obtained a place in the Ely lists without possessing any just claim to such an honour. A weeding-out of much that was worthless took place when the books were put into order as already related : the adaptations of Pratt and others were gradually consigned to oblivion ; a great many pieces were added to the *répertoire* of a kind suitable for performance without accompaniment ; among these I may mention six Motetts by Moritz Hauptmann. With regret and humility the confession must be made that in the selection of music for the Service at Ely, as in other cathedrals, a desire to please listeners is still apt to prevail over a reverence for Art,—for Art as consecrated to the highest of aims by great masters in past times.

CHAPTER VIII.

1873—1892.

“See how the wand’ring Danube flow,
Realms and religions parting.”

From lines attributed to Gibbon.

Half a century of Church Music would have lacked an important element of interest if my experiences had been purely domestic. During some five and twenty, however, of those years, a nearly annual visit has been paid to foreign countries, in which special note has been taken of the music of Divine Service in the churches.

Dean Goodwin had been present at the funeral of Dr. Mill in the cathedral in 1857, when the Plain Song from Merbecke had been sung: these solemn strains had made a very powerful impression upon him, and when he came to us as our head, he expressed a strong wish to use the ancient Tones for the Psalms on the Litany-days of each week. A supply of Helmore’s ‘Psalter Noted’ was obtained and this rendering of the Psalms on Wednesdays and Fridays was kept up for several years. The Dean had been a frequent visitor to countries in which the Latin ritual is presented under its most perfect forms; but he shared the prejudice common to many English churchmen against attendance at the religious services of the Roman communion, and he had never made the music of the early and mediæval church the subject of study. Hence he

was insensible to the faulty character of our Gregorian chanting. The nature of that faulty character will appear in the course of the brief remarks which I shall permit myself to make upon church music as carefully studied in Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy, between the year 1864 and the present date.

There is at once resemblance and contrast between foreign services of a high class and our own. One of the contrasts which will doubtless strike any traveller appears in the ordinary mode of placing their musicians in cathedrals or the greater churches. In a very great number of cases the singers and players are located in a roomy organ-loft at the west end of the church, and are not habited in an ecclesiastical dress. I recall few exceptions to this rule. Sometimes they are placed in a gallery or *ambo* constructed for them on one side of the church, as in the cathedral of Cologne. Again, they appear above the canopies of the Quire-stalls, as at St. Stephen's, Vienna, where room is found for an orchestra as well as for the few but very admirable singers. Visitors to Rome will remember that each of the movable organs in St. Peter's has its gallery for the vocalists attached to it, and travelling on the same wheels or rollers. At Paris, in that sumptuous but half-heathenish building, the Church of the Madeleine, a delightful effect is produced by concealing the singers behind the rere-dos of the high altar, where they are accompanied by a small organ, while interludes are played upon the fine instrument at the West end. No English churchman would willingly consent to substitute any of these arrangements for our own, namely

that of two rows of men and boys in surplices, closely associated with the clergy ; but our time-honoured plan is attended by the very serious disadvantage of dividing the singers into two separate choirs at times when concentration would be of the greatest possible value.

In one cathedral of northern France, however, that of Reims, our English system is conspicuous, but modified by a local custom which appears to me to be well worthy of our imitation. In that cathedral, the choristers and lay-clerks are ranged, as with us, in the sub-stalls and sub-sellia of the Quire on both sides of it, or, as we should say, Decani and Cantoris. During the performance of the harmonised portions of the music, they leave their places, and cluster round a conductor at desks placed as needed in the middle of the floor. They form a most picturesque group when thus concentrated, the bright scarlet of the boys' cassocks relieving the uniformity of black and white; the two contrabassi, usual in all the greater French churches, played by two lay-clerks, appear in the foreground; the bright brass ophicleide, also a familiar feature, shines among the surplices. The voices are accompanied by the sweet but clear tones of a small organ in a beautiful case, placed under one of the arches of the Quire; the console, with the key-board, is reversed, so that the player has an uninterrupted view of the conductor's *baton*. A grand organ in the north transept is used only for interludes and symphonies, as at Paris. Within the pretty group, thus formed, the leading boys, Treble and Alto, are close to the conductor, on his right and left; the leading tenors and basses are

behind them; the rest of the chorus complete the circle. Every musician will allow that this bell-like formation is most favourable to the production of the best musical effects : no surprise will be felt when I declare that a nearly perfect rendering of elaborate polyphonic music, *alla Palestrina*, is secured by these arrangements, and that energy, heartiness, and finish, are the characteristics of church music at Reims.

In all which has been thus far described, it will be seen that there is nothing which might not find its counterpart in an English Cathedral without any very wide divergence from established usage : the grouping of our two choirs into one during the performance of high-class pieces, not antiphonal, and the direction of the choir, so massed, by a competent conductor, though novelties, would soon cease to be the subject of adverse criticism as their practical advantages became apparent. I think it probable that musicians from Reims, paying a visit to Ely, might find, on their part, much to like and admire, possibly even to imitate, in our proceedings. Especially, I suspect, they would appreciate the harmonised Amen, the Preces, Versicles, and Litany, their own being often rough and careless. But if their visit had been paid on one of our Gregorian days, a few years ago, they would have listened without pleasure to our chanting of the Psalms: and if the choir-master or organist had been of the party, he would have greatly disliked the harmonies played upon the organ.

Some of us were well aware, moreover, that these ancient melodies should be sung in strict unison, not in

octaves. Yet our English habits did not admit of dispensing with the voices of the boys. But enough has been said on this subject, and I will only add that in these days of multiplied services it appears to me that we should do well to make increased use of Plain Song, sustained by adult voices. In my opinion, young boys should not be required to attend, on duty, twice on every day of the week. A noble service might well be rendered without their aid on many occasions when a severe gravity would be quite in place, especially if the lay-clerks were reinforced by a body of students from a theological college or kindred institution, or by members of a local Choral Society. My notes of foreign tours abound with memoranda of such services, solemn and impressive to the last degree, sung entirely without treble voices. I may mention a notable example at Metz, where the whole of the music was rendered most devoutly by a very small number of lay-clerks, I think only three, standing at a desk in the middle of the Quire, and reading from an enormous antiphonarium. The accompaniment by the Metz organist seemed to me to be a model of devotional playing. At Malines, at Liège, at the fine church of Ste. Gudule in Brussels, at Freiburg in the Breisgau, recollections of such dignified and masculine services rise to my memory as I write, and seem to me to suggest adoption by ourselves. But I do not deny that the introduction of such services into an English cathedral would meet with powerful opposition from musicians and other churchmen whose opinions are entitled to the highest respect.

CHAPTER IX.

1893.

Farewell !

The longest day of the year was near its close as I loitered on the beach at Dover. Light showers had fallen at intervals; both sea and sky wore an aspect somewhat sombre and sullen; the esplanade was deserted; a ragged little boy with a basket half filled with faded flowers sauntered alone where hundreds of merry visitors had jostled each other but half an hour before. Moved by the piteous appeal of the child, I paid my fancy price for a rose-bud, and lounged forward to the Admiralty pier. A light breeze from the east had now swept away the haze which had obscured the French coast: the bright electric light of Calais, and the red and white intermittent flashes of Cap Gris Nez, were very conspicuous. Above the town of Dover shone out the long lines of illuminated windows in the many-storied barracks on the hill; and the lively strains of a military band had been heard, playing operatic airs, doubtless beneath the open casements of a mess-room. The boom of the evening gun had echoed over the wide waste of waters, and I supposed that the bandsmen had been dismissed to their quarters, when, softly, slowly, and with exquisite balance of tone, the stillness of the air was broken by the solemn harmonies of the well-known hymn

“Abide with me.”

There are sensations which occur but once in a whole life-time. This was one of them. The tranquil beauty of the scene ; the deepening twilight ; the tall fortresses of chalk which overhang the beach ; the darkling sea, suggesting, as to some minds it always does, thoughts with which Time and Space have little concern ; the distant twinkling lights, speaking of care for the mariner ; all these surroundings lent a pathos to that evening hymn which I can never forget.

Perhaps the winding-up of their programme with this ‘Andante Religioso’ was explained next day, when I visited the ancient church within the ramparts of the castle, now used as the chapel of the garrison. Quoth the sergeant in charge of it, honestly proud of the venerable pile and of all appertaining thereto, “We have the best choir in England, Sir ! It is trained by Captain P.!” I have to thank the captain, thought I, for my Even-Song on the pier.

And so I take leave of my readers, mindful, as I close this record of life-long experiences, that

“FAST FALLS THE EVENTIDE.”

